Farm Labor

"EQUAL RIGHTS FOR AGRICULTURAL WORKERS"

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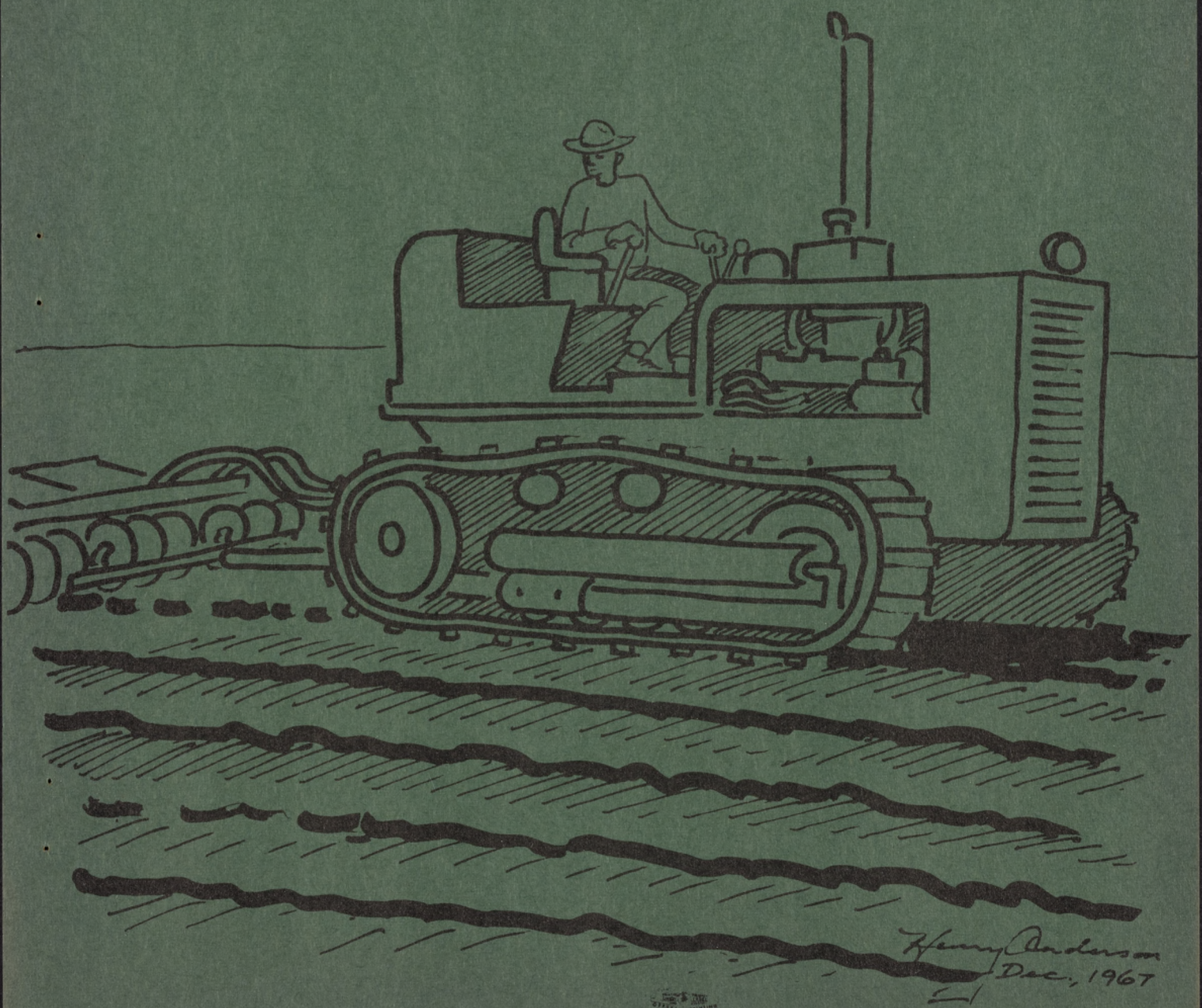

FARM LABOR
"Equal Rights for Agricultural Workers"

published by
Citizens for Farm Labor, P.O.Box 1173, Berkeley, Calif. 94701

Editor: Henry Anderson

Volume 5, Number 4: Autumn - Winter, 1967

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Cover: lest we forget, not all farm workers are hand laborers, by any means.

Special thanks, this issue, to Charles Smith, Fybate Lecture Notes, and Margaret Montague.

All labor donated

. The next food caravan to Delano from the San Francisco Bay Area will take place Saturday, January 27. One motorcade will leave the S.F. Labor Temple, 2940 16th St., at 8:00 A.M. Another will leave from 568 47th St., Oakland, at 7:00 A.M. All caravaneers will receive lunch at the striker's hall, 1457 Glenwood St., Delano, and there will, as always, be progress reports by Cesar Chavez and/or other strike leaders. Remember: the need, now, is for food rather than clothing. Remember, also, that even if you are not able to go on the caravan, the abovementioned addresses are serving as collection depots for you to leave canned goods, rice, flour, sugar, coffee, etc., at any time.

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Mike Ingerman, Doris Sloan, and our other Friends at the Northern California Friends Committee on Legislation, sent us a listing of votes by all U.S. Senators and Representatives on key measures in the 1967 congressional session. We trust there was no occult significance in the fact that FCL felt there were thirteen "key votes" in the Senate, and thirteen in the House. What is undeniably significant, however, is the fact that none of the key votes had to do with farm labor. If there had been any such roll-call votes, we feel sure that FCL would have included them. Agricultural labor is just not a matter of much legislative concern these days. We are told, "Wait until next year," which sounds uncomfortably like the refrain sung by the San Francisco Giants and 49ers, lo these many years.

For the record, the principal farm labor bill for which we must now wait has to do with collective bargaining (HR 4769 and SB 8). Unemployment insurance seems to have dropped from sight entirely.

Although it seems difficult to believe, farm labor fared even worse in the California state legislature. Rather than no progress, there was actually regression. To quote from the FCL Newsletter of Oct., 1967: "Farm workers lost their recognition as equal citizens under the state's anti-discrimination statutes. Assemblyman Willie L. Brown, Jr. (D., SF) introduced AB 205 to extend coverage under the Fair Employment Practices Act for agricultural workers beyond the September, 1967 deadline. This bill passed the Assembly, 55-14, but died in the Senate Committee on Agriculture. Farm labor thus no longer is under fair employment provisions."

We of CFL feel particularly keenly about this, because it was at our instigation that farm laborers were put under FEPC in the first place. For the life of us, we cannot understand how such an exclusion can be constitutional, in view of the language of the 14th Amendment.

* * * * * * * *

It is doubtful that the mayor of San Francisco has a great deal of power for good or ill in the area of agricultural labor. Nevertheless, we are swept by a certain uneasiness at the contrast between the previous mayor and the man who took office on January 8. We first met the former mayor, Jack Shelley, in 1959, when he was a Congressman and we were in Washington, D.C., doing a little lobbying against the bracero program. He was concerned and helpful, and became more concerned and helpful as the years went by. We would judge that, by 1963, Shelley was second only to Jeffery Cohelan in his usefulness as a channel through which information on the adverse effects of the bracero system was brought to the attention of uninformed or wavering congressmen. For example,

Shelley took it upon himself personally to distribute several copies of our book. Fields of Bondage, where he felt it would do the most good. We do not know whether or not Jack Shelley has been an effective mayor, but we always considered him a friend.

Now he has been replaced by a man who for many years has been President and Executive Director of the California Rice Growers Association. What -- rice paddies in San Francisco? No, dear hearts. The rice farms are in the Great Valley, but the interests of agribusiness can and do leap valleys, mountains, and tall buildings at a single bound. We note that Mr. Alioto has announced he will retain his presidency of the Rice Growers Association while he is mayor. If that is not illegal, it is unseemly, to say the very least. Citizens for FarmLabor (like the office of mayor itself) is politically non-partisan, but still.....

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Add publications you ought to look up if you have the time:

1. Austin P. Morris, S.J., "Agricultural Labor and National Labor Legislation," California Law Review, Vol. 54, No. 5, December, 1966, pp. 1939-1989. This article is basically an answer to the question that has long interested those of us with an historical turn of mind: how did it happen that agricultural workers were excluded from the Wagner Act? It just will not do, as Father Morris convincingly demonstrates, to slough off the question with some platitude about Congressional subservience to the farm bloc. Sample quotes: "...a strong argument can be made that it was administrative policy that precluded farm workers from coverage... The consistent policy of the (Roosevelt administration) was reflected in its belief that the interests of agricultural workers would be amply safeguarded as a consequence of the benefits to be enjoyed (under the Agricultural Adjustment Act) by the farmers who employed them."

This entire article seems to us a superb piece of research by a priest-lawyer. We recommend it without reservation.

2. William H. Friedland, "Migrant Labor: A Form of Intermittent Social Organization," ILR Research, Vol. 13, No. 2, 1967, pp. 3-14. (Published by the New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Cornell University, Ithica, New York.) This article is studded with insights and hypotheses which interest us, as an old sociologist. When Dr. Friedland talks about "the culture of the migrant worker," he is talking about something which is very real, and which needs to be (but usually isn't) reckoned with by would-be farm labor organizers. This particular article is concerned exclusively with the social organization of farm workers in the East Coast migrant stream, and therefore has little if anything to do with the situation in California. However, Dr. Friendland is spending his sabbatical at Stanford University this year, and is attempting to apply the same basic type of analysis to the several farm labor subcultures of California.

3. James Nix, "Characteristics of Mexican Immigrants Working on Farms," Farm Labor Developments, Sept.-Oct., 1967. (Published by U.S. Department of Labor.) In the inimitably evasive way of government agencies, deals with the controversial subject of "green carders." Claims that a study of the 631,000 alien address cards filed by Mexicans in 1965 revealed only 39,000 in agricultural occupations. These are solemnly classified by age, sex, etc. In fact, there are probably nearly twice that many green carders doing farm work a substantial portion of the year in California alone. They don't appear in these data because they report their occupations to the Immigration and Naturalization Service as "general laborer," "housewife," etc. A good study of the green card phenomenon remains to be done.

* * * * *

The following paper was presented at a conference in El Paso, Texas, on October 27, 1967. The conference was sponsored by the White House, and had to do with problems of the Spanish-speaking in the U.S. It would appear, from the following, that when the sponsors invited Ernesto Galarza, they got more than they bargained for. Dr. Galarza is well remembered by everyone familiar with the farm labor movement, of course, for his unexampled leadership during the 1950's. Dr. Galarza informs us that an ad hoc committee of 60 persons emerged from the El Paso conference to implement his recommendations.

RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
by Ernesto Galarza

The subject assigned to me is rural community development. I take this to refer particularly to the Mexican-Americans of the Southwest.

I am making this statement under a rule limiting oral presentations to fifteen minutes. I am aware, moreover, of the two presidential admonitions to all witnesses. The White House does not want soothing generalities. It does want proposals for solutions.

Under these prescriptions, I feel excused from loading my statement with statistical data. These are available in large quantities in the executive departments of the Federal government, as well as in private publications and academic treatises. Under these prescriptions, moreover, I feel that what I recommend in the way of solutions does require some generalities. If I do not state them my recommendations will make little sense. If I do I might be contradicting the President's request. I find my way out of this dilemma by assuring the Chairman that my generalities will not be soothing.

We begin, I assume, with rural community development for Mexican-Americans, the Spanish surnamed, or however you wish to call them, as of 1967. Our attention must focus on the states of Texas, California, Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona. In these states there are presently working at farm labor some 350,000 hired farm hands, of whom a large percentage are workers of Mexican ancestry. The communities they call home are spread from McAllen, Texas, to Marysville, California. Between the tips of this enormous crescent there are hundreds of towns, villages, settlements, and camps in which the Mexican rural people live or through which they drift. Today they are the rural residue of some 4,500,000 Americans of Spanish surname who live in the southwestern states.

If we look attentively at this sector of the Mexican-American population, we see the end-product of a historical process that goes back to the 1850's. The latest cycle of this process can be dated roughly from the 1930's to the 1960's. A fitting title for this chapter of the cycle would be The Industrialization of Western Agriculture. What used to be farming is now, by common definition, agri-business. The advent of industrial agriculture has been announced time and again by agribusinessmen. We are to understand that this is a happy event, for I have not noted any trace of bereavement in the announcements.

The industrialization of agriculture, as of manufacturing, has been the end-product of a massive, complex and interacting change in a multitude of scientific, social and economic relationships. I have time to underscore only those factors which have directly produced the present condition of the rural working class of Mexican-Americans. Briefly they are as follows:

1. The employment of Mexican citizens who have entered this country illegally has become a regular feature of the agricultural labor market. This illegal supply of labor rests on the willingness of corporate farms to hire, of intermediaries to transport, of Congress to tolerate, and of the Department of Justice to accomodate to this vicious black market in human toil.

2. The contracting and hiring of Mexican citizens as braceros has become an elaborate process of collective bargaining between three parties -- the United States Government, the Government of Mexico, and the associated corporate farmers of the southwest. The other parties to the arrangement -- the Mexican braceros themselves and the domestic Mexican-American laborers -- have been missing -- excluded -- from the bargaining process.

3. The crossing or commuter system has become a growing and decisive element in the border economy. Its effects can now be felt hundreds of miles north of the border.

4. Mechanization has made great strides in agriculture. The experts of the Department of Labor can tell you that in some areas mechanical cotton pickers are now harvesting 90 per cent of the crop. Machines have displaced the stoop labor of the tomato fields. With shakers and air cushions, two men can do in one minute what a crew used to do in one hour in the harvesting of nuts. Machines are picking grapes. Electric, not human, eyes are sorting lemons.

5. The research that has made possible the chemical, physical, and genetic progress that underlies mechanization is subsidized research. The University of California campus at Davis has been for decades the publicly-supported Academy of Science of agri-business.

6. A second form of subsidy has been the public financing of the farm placement service. I have special knowledge of the farm placement service of California. During the past quarter century this service has at no time been what by law it is supposed to be -- an agency to pursue and protect the job security of domestic farm workers. It has been, and continues to be, an extension into bureaucracy of the power and influence of agri-business.

7. A third form of subsidy is, and has been, a powerful element in the conformation of agri-business. I refer to the gigantic irrigation projects by which corporate farming takes water at bargain rates, capitalizing this unearned dividend into rapidly rising land values that place it out of the reach of the small grower. The corporate farms can tap this no-cost benediction by laying a siphon into the nearest concrete ditch or sinking a $75,000 well. Their promised land is not over Jordan; it is just over the Central Valley Canal. Verily, the Federal government has laid a water-table for them in the presence of their critics.

8. Housing for farm laborers and their families has reached a point of absolute scarcity in some areas. For twenty years, the barracks of the bracero made possible the alimination of the on-farm shanties, as they made possible the craven retreat of the Federal government after World War II from its wartime farm labor camp development.

9. The combined effect of the foregoing factors has destroyed or held in check the organization of Mexican-Americans into unions. I pass it on to you, Mr. Chairman, as the declaration of a high official of farm placement -- the policy has been to deal with associated agri-businessmen collectively and to deal with farm laborers individually.

10. The semi-urban farm labor pools have shrunk and their former residents have migrated in increasing numbers to the cities. You will find more Mexican-American ex-farm workers in the central city, poverty barrios of San Antonio, Phoenix, Los Angeles and San Jose than you will find employed workers in the fields. I will leave these ex-migrants there, for I am sure that other witnesses will bring to your attention how urban redevelopment is demolishing even these temporary reservations of the Mexican poor.

The brilliance of the technical performance of government -- and agribusiness -- I am not questioning. I am only giving it as my opinion that the historical cycle of the last quarter century is more of the same thing. What was accomplished between 1850 and 1880 by the United States cavalry, legal chicanery, tax frauds and treaty violations is being carried forward by vertical integration, subsidies, mechanization, and rural renewal.

And what do all the cycles of this historical process have in common? The dispossession of the Mexican, the cutting of his economic roots, and the destruction of Community -- his Community -- in the countryside.

Here, then, are my generalities.

What, as to solutions?

The central one is a declaration that it is national policy to give farm workers the rights of collective negotiation and bargaining with the government and with farm employers.

In support of such a policy, I would recommend that the Federal government withdraw all subsidies, direct and indirect, contracts and services from farm employers who employ illegals, braceros or "green carders" during a strike.

As a lesser evil, I would recommend that farm workers be included in the National Labor Relations Act.

I would recommend that land workers be given the necessary cooperation by the Administration so that they may organize and administer cooperative labor pools. These pools would replace the farm placement services.

I recommend that such labor pools extend to and include the registration and organization of the farm laborers who have been forced to migrate to the cities. With the present labor force still living in the country, they would represent a supply of labor ample for all the needs of agriculture, even in emergencies.

These would not be solutions but merely steps in the direction of a national policy different from that of the past. And they would affect only the hired farm laborers, who are rapidly becoming a small minority of the Mexican-American population of the Southwest. The majority are now semi-rural or city dwellers. In California, the Mexican ethnic group is now close to 90 per cent urbanized.

What is the meaning of community development in that demographic sector lying between hired farm workers and the metropolitan Mexicans? This is the area of the smaller rural towns and those shoestring settlements that see and fear, but have not yet felt, the fatal embrace of urban annexation. Here community development might make a stand to draw and hold the Mexican family, to keep it from migrating into the poverty barrios of the central cities. But if this effort were to be made, in good faith, it would require capital resources; the creation of new institutions or the revival of old ones, to guard them; and the educating of a generation of youth to serve them. And the economic tap root of such communities would have to be productive, not simply a small bone to be taken home in a bowwow-bag when the affluent society has finished dinner.

But even productive economic roots would not be enough. The Federal government would have to find an answer to the emerging situation along the border. There, a new frontier is in the making. Industrial capital from the north is moving to the border cities where it can combine with hundreds of thousands of poor Mexicans migrating from the south. Goods will be manufactured at Mexican wages and re-imported for sale at American prices. This has been described as a Hong Kong type of production. It has already begun to threaten jobs now held by Mexican-Americans throughout the Southwest.

I therefore want to resurrect a recommendation I made twenty years ago -- the creation by agreement between Mexico and the Unitdd States of a joint international border development authority to bring the border areas of both countries into balance by raising, at their point of contact, Mexican levels of income to American standards, not, as is happening now, by lowering American to present Mexican levels. By presidential or congressional directive, the funding of this authority should be made the keystone of United States financial commitment to Mexico. On this authority, I recommend there be appropriate representation, through their own economic agencies, of the persons of Mexican ancestry, on both sides of the border, whose jobs and lives are affected.

Finally, a recommendation as to the Inter-Agency Committee on Mexican-American Affairs. We have the impression that the President has set up this Committee to get things done, to solve the problems of the Mexican-Americans. But, as I understand it, the Committee has neither staff nor resources of its own. It has no policy control, and I know not what policy influence, over the participating executive departments.

We who have for thirty years seen the Department of Labor stand by, and at times connive, while farm labor unions were destroyed by agri-business; we who have seen the Immigration and Naturalization Service see-saw with the seasonal tides of wetbacks; we who are now seeing the Department of Housing and Urban Development assist in the demolishment of the urban barrios where ex-farm laborers have sought a final refuge; we who have waited for a Secretary of Education who would bristle with indignation, and back it with action, at an economic system that continues to produce that shameful anachronism -- the migrant child; we who have seen the Office of Economic Opportunity retreat with its shield, not on it, after calling the Mexican poor to do battle for maximum feasible participation in their own destinies.

We, may I say, are profoundly skeptical.

I therefore recommend that the Inter-Agency Committee on Mexican-American Affairs be staffed, funded and possessed of authority sufficient to advocate, promote and effecturate the recommendations I have made, and others that may come out of these hearings.

One of the functions of Citizens for Farm Labor is preparation and presentation of testimony for legislative and administrative hearings bearing on our concern of "equal rights for agricultural workers." The following testimony was presented by Anne Draper, CFL Secretary, on the occasion of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's most recent hearing on the question, "What are 'fair and reasonable' wages in the sugar industry?"

STATEMENT OF CITIZENS FOR FARM LABOR
BEFORE A HEARING OF THE AGRICULTURAL STABILIZATION AND CONSERVATION SERVICE, SAN FRANCISCO, DECEMBER 1, 1967

Citizens for Farm Labor is a voluntary, non-profit organization of citizens from all walks of life, committed to the proposition that agricultural workers and their families are entitled, as a matter of constitutional, moral, and basic human rights, to the same opportunities and protections as any other group within our economy.

We of Citizens for Farm Labor have testified at each of the sugar beet hearings held in California since the beginning of our committee in October, 1963. The last four hearing records will reveal that there has been no need to alter the basic arguments year after year. Only a statistic here and a statistic there needs to be changed to make our fundamental contentions as timely as ever. Some of the relevant statistics this year are as follows.

1. Another bureau within your own agency, the Department of Agriculture, reports that in the most recent period studied, the "composite agricultural wage" in California was over $1.60 an hour -- 14% more than the wage your bureau currently considers "fair and reasonable" for California sugar beet workers.

2. As a result of action by the Industrial Welfare Commission, the minimum wage in California for women engaged in farm work will soon be $1.65 an hour -- 17% higher than the minimum you consider adequate for women in sugar beet work. What is more, the Industrial Welfare Commission's orders call for two ten minute rest periods per day, a lunch period, rudimentary sanitation amenities, and other protections which seem never to have occurred to the Department of Agriculture.

3. The U.S. Department of Labor has determined that growers who are desirous of using braceros must offer at least $1.60 an hour to domestic workers; in other words, anything less than that would have an adverse effect on prevailing wage levels in the farm labor market.

4. Sugar workers in Hawaii begin at more than $2.00 an hour, and go on up to more than $3.50 an hour.

5. Assuming absolutely steady employment, a wage of $1.40 an hour would yield an annual income of $2,856. But since farm workers in California average only 1,100 hours of employment per year, a wage of $1.40 yields $1,540 a year -- somewhat less than half the lowest estimate of the poverty line we have ever seen.

From every standpoint, then, the federal Department of Agriculture and its "fair and reasonable" wage of $1.40, far from setting standards, is undercutting them. We believe that a demand for $2.00 an hour is, if anything, too modest, both in view of workers' needs (it would still yield only $2,200 a year, on the average), and in view of the favorable supply-demand position the American sugar industry has enjoyed ever since the embargo on imports from Cuba. We believe that $2.25 an hour would be little enough.

But in addition to such data as the foregoing, we want the hearing record to show, once again, that there are several broader principles at stake.

1. It is improper for the Department to rest its determinations, as it does every year (see, e.g., Federal Register, April 1, 1967 (32 F.R. 5458)), on "producers' ability to pay." The wage provision of the Sugar Act, in common with the Fair Labor Standards Act, the Taft-Hartley Act, the Social Security Act, and all other legislation in the area of labor conditions assumes that if an employer cannot meet decent standards for his employees, then he should go out of business and make way for those who can meet decent standards. There is no reason whatsoever why the highly-subsidized, vertically-integrated sugar industry should be an exception, any more than the automobile industry, the garment industry, or any other.

2. It is improper, and there is no foundation in law, for the Department to permit the employment of minors, 14 to 16 years of age, at wages 25% less than $1.40 -- i.e., $1.05 an hour. It has been public policy in this country for fifty years to try to keep children in school at least through high school. An enormous amount of federal money is currently being spent to counteract the effects of premature "dropping out" from education. It is truly bizarre to see a federal agency now promulgating a policy which can only have the effect of making child labor attractive to employers. If child labor is permitted at all in the sugar industry -- and we are not conceding that it should be -- it should be recompensed at precisely the same wage levels as other labor in the industry.

3. It is improper, and there is no foundation in law, for the Department to promulgate piece rates, such as those in Section 862.7(ii) of this year's wage determination, with no requirement that each worker's piece rate earnings must yield at least the equivalent of the hourly minimum guarantee. There should be no need for us to point out that actual earnings under piece rates can and do vary wildly, depending on how muddy the field is, how rank the growth of weeds is, and so forth.

4. Finally, and most importantly of all, it is improper, and there is no foundation in law, for the Department to announce wage rates which it has no serious intention of enforcing. The Department's "fair and reasonable" rates are a bitter laughingstock among countless farm workers in the State of California, not only because they are unfair and unreasonable on their face, but because they are in practice widely flouted and subverted by growers and labor contractors with almost total impunity.

During your stay in California, we respectfully suggest that you take time to look into the files of the regional Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, at the complaints of sugar beet workers who have been defrauded. Note the cases that have been "closed" because the complainant could not press his claim: he was too busy trying to make a living for himself and his family—in some other county, or some other state, indeed perhaps some other country--to be able to pursue a wage claim through the many complexities and many months involved. And note the

cases that have been "closed" because the workers have not bee able to prove beyond peradventure of a doubt that they worked ten hours or eight hours' pay, etc. Bear in mind that it is difficult to buy wrist watches on earnings of $1,540 a year. And note the cases that have been "closed" because workers submitted their complaints to local committees on which were sitting the very growers they were attempting to file complaints against. And bear in mind at all times that not one in a hundred abuses ever appears in these files, because workers are not aware of their rights, or do not speak the English language, or have become so completely disenchanted by their own experiences and their friends' experiences that they shrug when they are defrauded and merely try to find a more scrupulous grower or contractor to work for next year.

We have said before, and we say again, that it might be better for the body politic and the morale of its citizens not to pass laws and administrative regulations at all than to enact those which sound attractive, raise people's hopes, and then dash those hopes bitterly and cynically.

We thus close our testionny this year, as we do every year, with an appeal, in the most urgent tones we can muster, that you include in your recommendations to the Secretary of Agriculture not only a wage rate which is adequate to meet human needs, but provision for translating that rate from words on a piece of paper into a reality which has practical meaning to the living, breathing, flesh-and-blood men and women who are bending their backs in the fields in order that we may nave sugar on our cereal and in our coffee.

GREAT SOCIETY DEPARTMENT

Family Farm Division

Every year, Sen. John J. Williams of Delaware (a state which grows a good deal more dacron than cotton) rises in the U.S. Senate to remind his colleagues once more that federal programs designed to shore up farm prices and thus, theoretically, enable the small and medium-size producer to stay on the land are, in fact, not accomplishing that purpose. They are, rather, serving primarily as an enormous windfall to large producers, and, in effect, strengthening them in their competitive drive to push the family farm into oblivion. A case in point is the program to limit production of basic commodities. Each producer is assigned an acreage quota of cotton, tobacco, or whatever; he is paid for not growing the commodity on the rest of his land. He makss money three ways: he grows his quota on his very best soil, where production and profit is highest; he can grow some non-restricted crop on the rest of his land; and, of course, he gets the subsidy for not growing the restricted commodity -- a subsidy which amounts essentially to as much as he could have made if he had grown it.

On June 19, 1967, Sen. Williams rose once again on the floor of the Senate and said:

> ...for the past several years the administration has been giving lip service to a revision of our farm program whereby it would curtail the large subsidy payments which are being made to the corporate type of farmers.
>
> Notwithstanding these fine phrases, however, each time that the proposal has been before the Congress to limit these subsidy payments not only was the administration silent but it actually opposed the amendment which would place a limitation on the amount which could be paid to any one individual and which would therefore limit these programs to the benefit of the bona fide farmers.
>
> As a result, the size of the cash payments for land diversion has contiuously expanded. These subsidy payments to which we are referring represent payments under the soil bank and acreage diversion programs, and so forth; that is, they are direct cash payments and are in addition and not a part of any subsidy which the Government may be making under the price-support program to these same individuals.[1]

The Senator then read into the Congressional Record a list of 1,210 "so-called farming operations" which received payments in 1966 of over $50,000 for not growing cotton, sugar beets, or whatnot. The complete list may be found on pages S8412-S8422 of the Record for June 19, 1967. There is space here to reproduce only the California firms which received payments of over $100,000 each.

Fresno County

Griffen, Inc. (Huron)	$2,397,073	Five Points Ranch, Inc.	$471,583
South Lake Farms (Five Points)	1,468,696	Airway Farms, Inc.(Fresno)	364,177
Vista Del Lland (Firebaugh)	622,840	Jack Harris, Inc.(5 Points)	344,672
Boston Ranch Co. (Lemoore)	506,061	Sullivan & Gragnani (Tranquility)	290,914

1 Low-interest crop loans, irrigation water below cost, and many other types of subsidization are also omitted from these figures. (Ed. note.)

Fresno County (cont.)

McCarthy & Hildebrand (Burrel)	282,946	V. C. Britton (Firebaugh)	122,216
Schramm Ranches, Inc. (San Joaquin)	270,600	J. E. O'Neill, Inc. (Fresno)	116,564
Timco (Mendota)	250,005	Linneman Ranches, Inc. (Dos Palos)	113,742
Redfern Ranches, Inc. (Dos Palos)	203,061	Harnish Five Points (Five Points)	113,291
Coit Ranch, Inc. (Mendota)	184,625	Ryan Bros (Mendota)	110,198
Wm. H. Noble (Kerman)	166,794	Telles Ranch, Inc. (Firebaugh)	108,398
Frank C. Diener (Five Points)	161,522	Wood Ranches (Lemoore)	104,213
W. J. Deal (Mendota)	153,560		
Raymond Thomas, Inc.	153,279		
M.J. & R.S.Allen (Coalinga)	153,037		
Hugh Bennett (Firebaugh)	149,917		
Pilibos Bros., Inc. (Fresno)	140,079		

Imperial County

H.B.Murphy Co. (Brawley)	358,079	A. Borchard Co. (Brawley)	133,201
Elmore Co. (Brawley)	287,026	Salton Sea Farms (Calipatria)	128,762
Jack Elmore (Brawley)	197,219	Stephen Elmore (Brawley)	126,243
Russell Bros. (Calipatria)	189,608	Donald H. Cox (Brawley)	110,196
W.E.Young & W.E.Young, Jr.	181,182	Neil Fifield Co. (Brawley)	107,892
Irvine Co. (El Centro)	179,737	Wynne & Elmore (Calipatria)	104,585
C.T.Dearborn (Calipatria)	150,859	Stafford Hannon (Brawley)	101,337
Sinclair Ranches (Calipatria)	141,045	Adamek & Dessert (Seeley)	100,184
J.H.Benson Estate (Brawley)	140,576		

Kern County

Kern County Land Co. (Bakersfield)	652,057	C.J.Vignolo (Shafter)	169,667
S. A. Camp Co. (Shafter)	426,922	R.M.Mettler (Bakersfield)	129,743
Miller & Lux (Bakersfield)	299,051	Tejon Ranch Co. (Bakersfield)	121,096
M & R Sheep Co. (Oildale)	286,949	E.H.Mettler & Sons (Shafter)	111,918
Giumarra Vineyard Co (Bakersfield)	246,882	Didart Bros. (Bakersfield)	109,615
Houchin Bros. (Buttonwillow)	245,313	McKittrick Ranch (Bakersfield)	107,247
W.B.Camp & Sons (Bakersfield)	192,080	Cattani Bros. (Bakersfield)	105,318
O.M.Bryant, Jr. (Pond)	180,443	Wheeler Farms (Bakersfield)	100,259
Mazzie Farms (Arvin)	173,014	Kern River Delta Farms (Wasco)	152,323

Kings County

J.G.Boswell Co. (Corcoran)	2,807,633	Gilkey Farms, Inc. (Corcoran)	189,048
Westlake Farms (Stratford)	622,569	Borba Bros. (Riverdale)	154,573
West Haven Farming Company	289,841	Boyett Farming Co. (Corcoran)	117,365
Vernon L. Thomas, Inc. (Huron)	285,953	Nichols Farms, Inc. (Hanford)	112,677
J.G.Stone Land Co. (Stratford)	232,851	R.A.Rowan Co.	100,773

Riverside County

Wilco Produce (Blythe)	296,484	John Norton Farms (Blythe)	128,735
Riverview Farm & Cattle Co.(Blythe)	266,654	Kennedy Brothers (Indio)	107,466
Clarence Robinson (Blythe)	139,745		

Other Counties

Red Top Ranch (Madera Co.)	133,555	E.L.Wallace (Yolo Co.)	149,636
Bowles Farming Company (Merced Co.)	141,375	E.L.Wallace & Sons (Yolo Co.)	105,443
C.J.Shannnn & Sons (Tulare Co.)	230,572	Heidrick Farms (Yolo Co.)	103,722

A few of many comments which might be made on this fascinating material (less than a tenth of the original is reproduced here):

1. California corporations had the honor of pulling down the two hugest windfalls, four of the top five, seven of the top nine, etc.

2. All the land barons mentioned by William Reich in his series on evasion of the 160-acre limitation (see the last issue of FARM LABOR, this issue, and the next issue) are here: Kern County Land Company, Miller & Lux, Tejon Ranch Co., Irvine Ranch Co, etc.

3. The DiGiorgio Fruit Corporation, Delano branch, did not make quite enough to appear in the above list, but managed to draw down $56,100 -- presumably for not growing cotton which it had no intention of growing anyway.

4. Another company well-known and well-beloved by all friends of the farm labor movement -- the Giumarra Vineyard Corporation (see FARM LABOR, Vol. V, No. 3)-- it will be noted, made $246,882. Some interesting questions could be raised about the seemliness of the government turning over such sums of money to farm employers who are in the midst of a strike -- particularly in view of the fact there is hell to pay if anyone so much as hints a little War on Poverty money might work to the advantage of farm employees who are on strike.

5. From the above data, it is obvious that in many instances more money is going to the big operators than at first meets the eye. For example, there are four corporations bearing the Elmore family name, in Imperial County, each of which received payments of $100,000 to $300,000. There are several corporations from the Camp family in Kern County listed; two in the immediate family of E.L. Wallace in Yolo County; etc. And this is to say nothing of the satellite corporations which did not appear in the foregoing list because they received less than $100,000; and it is to say nothing of those which the family head was modest enough to disguise under some name other than his own.

6. The Democratic Party politician, Aaron Quick of Imperial County, received $95,083. But he has a way to go yet before he matches the even better-known Democratic Party politician, Senator James Eastland of Sunflower County, Mississippi, who received $129,997. Further research would unquestionably reveal other politicians who were directly profiting from the "soil bank" program. Many more, of course, are benefitting in the form of campaign contributions from growers who directly profit from the program. Does the Honorable John J. Williams really wonder why the system continues when everyone knows it has nothing to do with its purported purpose of saving the family farm?

The author of the following article was formerly a VISTA volunteer. She is presently a Group Coordinator for Self-Help Enterprises, Inc., working out of its Fresno office.

SELF-HELP HOUSING FOR FARM WORKERS

by Lucy Norman

Enough descriptions have been written recently of poor housing conditions and the costly physical and psychological effects they have on family. It should suffice to say that California's San Joaquin Valley has all of these problems and that an old fashioned idea has been very successful in dealing with them.

The Self-Help Housing program was started in the San Joaquin Valley in 1961 by the American Friends Service Committee with the late Howard Washburn as its first director. It was patterned after a similar AFSC housing project established in western Pennsylvania during the depression in the spirit of genuine, old fashioned "barn raising." Then, in January, 1965, Self-Help Enterprises, Incorporated, a non-profit corporation, was formed to continue the program on a larger scale.

The program now operates in seven valley counties: Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, Stanislaus, and Tulare. Robert Marshall has succeeded Howard Washburn as its director. The program receives funds from the Office of Economic Opportunity, plus several smaller grants from private foundations.

Self-Help Housing is designed for groups of low-income farm-working families. "Low income" is defined as $2,000 to $5,000 per year, depending on the number of children. Each family must qualify for a low interest (5 percent), long-term (33 years) loan from the Farmers Home Administration, which is part of the Department of Agriculture. The loan covers the cost of a building lot and all materials necessary to build a three or four bedroom house of 960 to 1,200 square feet. Each family is then required to contribute up to 1,500 hours of labor as "sweat equity" in a cooperative building effort.

The staff of Self-Help Enterprises provides a group coordinator to interest and organize groups of six to sixteen families and places a construction supervisor on the job to direct the building of houses and to make sure that they meet all codes. Everything, with the exception of the tile and cabinet work, and sometimes plumbing, is done by the families themselves.

In this manner, with a down payment of up to 1,500 hours of labor, and a monthly payment of about $40 plus taxes and insurance, and a great deal of patience and perseverance, a family earning an average of $3,000 a year can own a house that would sell on the open market for $10,000 to $12,000. In many cases, the total monthly payment is less than such families were paying for rent in a substandard dwelling

New ideas are being tried all the time in an effort to keep the total cost of the house as low as possible without sacrificing quality.

Some counties are experimenting with having participants do most of their own plumbing under close supervision. It is hoped that a co-operative shop can be established, run as a business by ex-participants to make the cabinets for all the self-help houses in the seven county area.

This is probably one of the most widely-approved programs of its kind. Even those who usually disapprove of "govenment giveaway" programs see this as one in which each family works hard for what it gets and pays back the full amount of the government loan. It also makes responsible home owners and full-fledged property taxpayers. Some skeptical communities have come to see that the program benefits them by stabilizing a fluctuating, migrant element of their society, by upgrading some of its more depressed areas, and by broadening its tax base.

Many of these communities, such as Farmersville and Woodlake in Tulare County, and Huron and Firebaugh in Fresno County, have given the program a great deal of support. Their city councils and planning commissions have done everything they could to expedite self-help housing in their communities. The Woodlake city council raised over $3,500 for a non-interest loan to Self-Help Enterprises to make the down payment on a subdivision there.

Those who place greater importance on human elements also see many desirable features in the program: the dignity that owning a home brings a family; the technical knowledge gained in building the home from the footing to the roof; the increased human understanding that comes from participating in a cooperative group effort and group decision-making; better health from living in a safe, sanitary, modern home; and stability and peace of mind for a family with new permanency.

The program is not without its problems, however. One of the largest and most difficult is that of obtaining land. Sometimes prejudice stands in the way. More often, building lots are far too expensive for low-income families. (This, in some cases, we suspect, is also a product of prejudice.) But in many communities, lots are simply not available. A revolving land fund has helped to alleviate this problem somewhat. Several self-help subdivisions are in the offing and will provide lots, with all services, to participants at cost.

Another major problem is that the self-help housing program cannot reach the poorest families. Each one must qualify for a Farmers Home Administration loan. If a family is too poor to qualify, it cannot participate in the self-help program -- and, of course, it is the poorest families who need the program most. It is hoped that the program may some day include grant money to aid those families who could not otherwise qualify for a loan. Small grants could be used to alleviate heavy debt loads and clear liens and judgments which often disqualify a marginal family. Even with small grants for some families the self-help program is less expensive and provides society with more returns, material and otherwise, than the Federal Housing Administration low-rent projects.

Physically, the program has been very successful. As of August 31, 1967, there were within the seven county area 100 houses completed, 77 under construction, 139 loans being processed by the Farmers Home Administration, and 173 families meeting in organizing groups. The completed houses can be seen and touched. You can visit the weekly group meetings and watch their progress. But you cannot see the large changes and the many small ones that self-help housing can bring to a family. And herein lies its strength.

- End -

PERUSING THE PRESS

San Francisco Examiner, May 14, 1967: "CROP LOSS MAY HIT $400 MILLION"

San Francisco Chronide, Oct. 5, 1967: "California tomato growers reported yesterday that they have lost millions of dollars this year because of unseasonable rains and a shortage of workers."

California Farmer, December 16, 1967: "...this year's (tomato) crop put about $130 million in the growers' till..."

Ed. Note: That $130 million was $10 million more than the best pre-season estimates, and a new record. The "crop losses," as usual, turned out to be a gimmick, as usual reported with a straight face by the newspapers, for the sole purpose of softening up politicians and the public to accept convict labor, higher prices, etc.

* * * * *

San Francisco Chronicle, Sept. 30, 1967: "...Governor Ronald Reagan yesterday (allowed) Merced county fig growers to hire 200 State convicts from Duell Vocational Institution in Tracy. Reagan claimed he took the step...'only as a last resort' to avert 'a disastrous crop loss' threatened because of an alleged shortage of workers."

San Francisco Chronicle, October 4, 1967: "Governor Ronald Reagan authorized more growers to hire State prisoners to pick crops yesterday, but was turned down immediately by Monterey county authorities. San Bernardino county quickly approved Reagan's plan for the hiring of 100 convicts by grape growers there...

"It isn't clear how much the growers are offering potential workers. But Ray Roth, chief of the State Farm Labor Service, acknowledged it has not been the $1.65 an hour which would make them eligible to hire Mexican nationals."

California AFL-CIO News, October 6, 1967: "Governor Reagan's authority to use convict labor in California's fields was challenged as unconstitutional in a court action in San Francisco initiated yesterday by the California Labor Federation, AFL-CIO. Citing Article 10, Section 1 of the State Constitution...the Federation asked for an ex parte temporary restraining order from Superior Court Judge Charles S. Perry. ...

"Article 10, Section 1 of the State Constitution stipulates that: 'The labor of convicts shall not be let out by contract to any person, co-partnership, company, or corporation, and the legislature shall, by law, provide for the working of convicts for the benefit of the state.'"

California AFL-CIO News, December 1, 1967: "The preliminary injunction won by the California Labor Federation to bar the use of convict labor in California's fields has been served on Governor Ronald Reagan and two of his top aides, Raymond K. Procunier, Director of the State Department of Corrections, and Peter Weinberger, Director of the State Department of Employment.

"The injunction, authorized by San Francisco Superior Court Judge Robert J. Drewes on November 14, was issued last week."

Ed. Note: During the two-month delay, as is always the way in these matters, the figs, grapes, etc., were all harvested. However, we trust that the precedent will dissuade Mr. Reagan from acting so precipitously next time one of his grower friends whispers in his ear, "How about letting us have some of those prisoners who are just sitting around??"

* * * * * * *

San Francisco Chronicle, October 6, 1967: "The State Social Welfare Department launched a drive yesterday to make certain that people on welfare are required to work for growers who claim a labor shortage. ... Reagan told a news conference that 'it doesn't make sense for able-bodied people to sit by while fruit and vegetables rot.'

"Just last month in Sacramento county, 45 people were cut from the welfare rolls for refusing farm work. Another 97 accepted it, however."

San Francisco Chronicle, Oct. 10, 1967: "State officials yesterday reported success in a drive to require 'physically able' welfare recipients to work for growers who claim a labor shortage. ...Robert Fugina, an assistant to Health and Welfare Administrator Spencer Williams, who launched the State drive...said, however, that there still are some 'problems' which the State is working on. He said, for instance, that...the State...must develop a plan for getting women on welfare rolls into the farm jobs. The problem here,he explained, is to provide themwith baby-sitters. ...

"Fugina said the Welfare Department doesn't know howmuch the workers referred to farm jobs are paid..."

California AFL-CIO News, October 13, 1967: "The State AFL-CIO has challenged the Reagan administration to prove that welfare recipients are not being used to undercut the wages and working conditions of the state's domestic farm workers.

San Francisco Chronicle, Nov. 4, 1967: "The State AFL-CIO urged the State yesterday to change a regulation that allows growers to hire welfare recipients for as little as $1 an hour. ... AFL-CIO chief Thomas L. Pitts...noted that county welfare departments make up the difference between the income of the recipients in farm work and the amount they would get on welfare. By allowing growers to pay as little as $1 an hour, he claimed, the government is 'subsidizing growers who refuse to offer adequate wages.'"

Service Union Reporter, Nov., 1967: "The old propaganda whipping-boy -- the welfare recipient -- was back in the news this month. With much fanfare, Governor Reagan issued orders to comb the state's 1.2 million people on welfare ostensibly to weed out all the 'freeloaders'... They were to rpport immediately to 'desperate' growers to save their crops from 'rotting in the fields.' And if they didn't? Wham! Off the welfare rolls they'd go. Another righteous blow struck for individual initiative and free enterprise!

"At week's end...a grand statewide total of 261 out of 1,200,000 welfare recipients were wiped off the welfare rolls for refusing the jbs. This is a grand total of 21/1000 of one per cent. That should be enough to explode the myth of hordes of welfare 'freeloaders' living it up at taxpayer expense. Unfortunately, though, the myth will persist. ...Ronnie Baby isn't going to let the facts spoil a good thing.

LAND, WATER AND POWER MONOPOLY IN CALIFORNIA

Irrigation and Water Rights

Talk delivered by
William Reich over
Station KPFA
March 12, 1967

California extends along the Pacific coast for nearly 900 miles and has an average width of 200 miles. It is a land of many climates. Even within limited areas there are wide contrasts, due to altitude and distance from the ocean.

The entire state, except for a narrow strip along the North Coast, is arid or semi-arid. This means there is not enough rainfall to sustain farming. The average rainfall varies from over 100 inches a year in the mountains to less than 2 inches in the Imperial Valley. More than two thirds of the precipitation occurs from the latitude of San Francisco northward. From the undeveloped north coastal streams such as the Klamath, Eel and Van Duzen, an average of 30 million acre-feet or 42% of the State's mean annual runoff still goes to the ocean unused.

California produces over $4 billion of farm products each year. Ninety-five percent of this is grown on irrigated land. Only 20% of the state, or 20,000,000 acres, is considered irrigable. We are presently irrigating 8½ million acres, with some 50,000 additional acres being brought under irrigation each year. The State's rich heartland, the Central Valley, made up of the basins of the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers, produces 80% of the State's irrigated crops.

California has total water resources to meet forseeable requirements. But the State suffers from a serious maldistribution of this supply, both from the viewpoint of location and time. Most of the supply is located in the north, while it is needed in the south, and practically all the rainfall occurs in winter, while irrigation needs are greatest in summer.

These handicaps are overcome to some extent by nature and by vast engineering works constructed by man. Nature provides the winter snowpack of the Sierras covering 12,000 square miles. In places it is fifteen or twenty feet deep and stores 14.5 million acre feet of water which is released during the spring and summer.

Nature also stores the runoff of thousands of past seasons in underground basins. This water can be drawn upon as needed.

Because of the maldistribution of our water supplies, man has built reservoirs to store it and aqueducts to transfer it where it can be used.

The City of Los Angeles became a pioneer in interbasin diversion when in 1913 she reached 280 miles across the Sierras into the Owens Valley to develop the Los Angeles Aqueduct. San Francisco went to Hetch Hetchy inthe Tuolumne River Basin near Yosemite. The East Bay cities crossed the San Joaquin Valley to develop a supply from the Mokelumne River. In 1941 the Metropolitan Water District, serving most of Southern California, completed its 242-mile aqueduct from the Colorado River to Los Angeles and later extended it to San Diego. These works were constructed primarily to provide drinking and industrial water to growing cities. Other projects, large and small, have been constructed to provide irrigation water. An epic in this field is the struggle of Imperial Valley farmers to bring Colorado River water to their desert, and their equally heroic effort to curb the mighty river when it broke through the sandy barriers and threatened to convert the below-sea-level valley into an inland sea.

Early settlers learned quickly how to utilize California's fickle streams. In 1852 gold miners discovered they were not limited to panning gold from the riverbeds. By means of flumes they diverted water into gravel on the banks and recovered many times as much gold as they could by panning. Hydraulic mining was developed and soon everywhere in the gold country hillsides were being cut away by swift streams of water from thousands of nozzles, washing a never-ending flow of mud and gravel through sluice boxes where the gold was recovered while the slime and dredgings passed into the rivers. Soon the Sacramento, Feather, Yuba, American and other rivers were clogged with sediment. It is estimated that two billion cubic yards of California mountainside was dumped into the rivers, much of it finally coming to rest in the Delta and San Francisco Bay. Riverbeds sere raised many feet, increasing the flood hazard.

Farmers also began building flumes and canals to divert water onto their lands to grow crops. Without water, most California land is useless. It can be used only for grazing or dry farming. The success of these ventures is dependent upon rainfall in the right amounts at the right time. But with a reliable source of water a great variety of crops can be grown and the gamble taken out of farming.

Unfortunately there is not enough flow inmost streams to supply the farmers' demand for water. This gave rise to conflicts over water rights.

When California became a state in 1850 the legislature adopted the common law of England concerning water rights. This act made the waters of a river subject to the rights of riparian use, which meant that individuals with land adjacent to the river enjoyed first rights to the use of water, and lands which did not border the stream had no rights at all. This policy works in a wet country where the water is returned to the river after running a water wheel or other devices. But it cannot apply to a dry country where landowners consume the water on their crops, returning very little of it to the river. Obviously downstream landowners cannot enjoy the full natural flow of the river as required by law.

However, this act suited the miners' need for water and sluicing. But as irrigated farming developed this concept became a severe handicap to those farmers whose land did not border a stream.

The law worked to the advantage of Henry Miller, of Miller and Lux, who had acquired vast tracts along the San Joaquin and Kern rivers. He used it to force hundreds of landowners not on the river to sell to him at his own price or to buy water from him. In the 1880's the law was challenged by Tevis and Haggin, founders of the Kern County Land Co. A historic struggle with Miller and Lux over "rights" to the Kern River was carried through three courts. Miller and Lux won and the doctrine of riparian rights became the basic law of California, as opposed to the concept of prior beneficial appropriation adopted by most Western States.

The result has been a mass of claims against the water in all California streams. This has seriously hampered integrated development. Dr. Elwood Mead, who made a study of water rights in California, said that "the aggregate of all water claims in the State represent enough moisture to submerge the continent". Not until the 1930's was California's antiquated water rights law modified tobbring it in line with reality.

The law assumes that once water rights have been established, the landowner has a vested interest which can be bought and sold. For example, the Federal Bureau of Reclamation paid several million dollars to Miller and Lux for rights to San Joaquin River water which was to be transferred southward by the Friant-Kern Canal. The Bureau also acquired rights to the flood waters conserved by its reservoirs. It contracts to deliver water over a period of years to irrigation and water districts, much as a utility sells electricity. The owner of the land on which the water is used does not acquire a vested right to it. Such Bureau contracts have been approved overwhelmingly whenever members of irrigation districts have had an opportunity to vote on them. Some landowners, however, oppose the contracts on grounds that they should be given a permanent legal right to the water once it is used beneficially on the land.

When the 1878 state constitutional convention met, problems of irrigation and water supply had already become so acute that this became one of the chief topics of discussion. The delegates adopted almost unanimously the principle that statewide water development was a necessity and appropriated $100,000 to the State Engineer "to provide a system of irrigation, promote rapid drainage and improve navigation on the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers." The convention was greatly concerned about the large landholdings which had come into existence and formally resolved that land monopoly should be ended. Defeated by a narrow margin were resolutions calling for a ban on ownership by any one person of more than 640 acres of farm land and one which would limit the sale of state-owned land to 320 acres to one person. Such resolutions foreshadowed the acreage limitation provisions of federal Reclamation law which were enacted in 1902.

The Wright Act, passed in 1887, provided the first real stimulus to comprehensive community development of water resources. It established machinery for the formation of irrigation districts. The Act, as subsequently modified, forms the basis of the present Water Code under which today districts irrigate nearly 2½ million acres. Democratically operated irrigation districts enable large and small landowners to pool their resources and water rights and to levy taxes to construct and maintain irrigation works. The Act, written during the heyday of the Henry George movement, provides for levying the "single tax" on land, but not on improvements.

Large landholders fought the Wright Act on grounds that it would force them to share water and construction expenses with settlers with whom they might be forced into a district. Years later they were able to get the state legislature to pass an act permitting the formation of Water Districts and Water Storage Districts where voting is based on assessed valuation of land rather than on the "one man- one vote" principle as in irrigation districts.

The first two districts created under the Wright Act - the Modesto and Turlock Irrigation Districts- are still in existence and have established records of sound achievment. Together they built Don Pedro and La Grange dams, an extensive system of canals, and an efficient hydro-electric plant. Retail sale of electricity has been so profitable that the Modesto Irrigation District now levies only a token tax and provides water to farmers at no cost whatever.

This policy of making users of electricity pay all or part of the water costs is practiced by most agencies which operate multi-purpose water projects, including the State and Federal governments. The "power increment" in the cost of water from federal reclamation projects often amounts to one third the total cost.

Several irrigation districts have formed "partnerships" with the Pacific Gas and Electric Co. for the construction of multi-purpose projects- the company getting the electricity and the district the water. Power revenues from PG&E amortize nearly the entire cost of the facilities, enabling the Districts to charge very little for water.

This practice of making power users pay higher rates to subsidize irrigation has been justified on the ground that the water was going to family-operated farms and that cheap water is a factor in holding down the price of food. Now that some 90% of our food and fiber is produced on corporation farms with tie-ins to utilities, railroads, banks, processors and distributors, it is doubtful that this subsidy is any longer in the public interest.

Irrigation and water districts were organized in all farming regions of the state to develop local water resources. It soon became obvious, however, that such piecemeal development was wasteful and overlapping and did not provide for transfer of water from areas of surplus to areas of deficiency. As far back as 1880 the State Engineer saw the need for such development and drew up sound plans, but nothing resulted. The era of comprehensive water planning on a statewide basis really began in 1920 with the study produced by Col Robert B. Marshall, Chief Geographer of the US Geological Survey. The Marshall Plan provided for a series of reservoirs and acqueducts extending from the Klamath River across the Central Valley and into Southern California and became the basis for the Central Valley Project and the State Water Plan.

I have discussed only the utilization of surface water. Such supplies provide less than half our needs. The rest is pumped from the 250 or more underground basins. The total capacity of these basins is estimated at 300,000,000 acre feet, compared to only 33 million acre feet of storage capacity in present surface reservoirs.

Many of the underground basins have been seriously overdrawn to the extent that sea water and other water of poor quality is intruding. In some places the land is sinking from excessive pumping. As the water level drops, wells must go deeper and the cost of pumping increases.

Only recently has the importance of the underground reservoirs been fully realized. The State Dept of Water Resources is making studies of withdrawals in several areas. The legislature enacted measures enabling formation of water replenishment districts with authority to assess in proportion to the amount of water pumped-that is, to impose a pump tax. Such a pump tax is now being used in Orange and Santa Clara counties where large amounts of water are imported to replenish underground supplies.

THE STRUGGLE FOR THE CENTRAL VALLEY PROJECT

Speech delivered by William Reich over Station KPFA, March 26, 1967

The Central Valley Project, the nation's largest irrigation system, is one of the most important features of California's economy. Without it the State's rapid population and economic growth could not be sustained. Yet every step of the development of this gigantic asset has been opposed by the land monopolists and the Pacific Gas and Electric Company who now reap most of its benefits.

The Central Valley Project is a system of dams, reservoirs and canals conserving and storing water and moving it Southward from the Northern part of the Central Valley. The project generates electricity necessary for its operation and an additional amount to produce revenue to subsidize irrigation. Other benefits include flood control, recreation and repulsion of salt water in the Delta.

Its major facilities are Shasta Dam which stores water of the upper Sacramento and its tributaries and with capacity to generate 500,000 kilowatts of electricity; Trinity Dam which deflects water from the Trinity River into the Central Valley; Friant Dam which stores water of the San Joaquin River to be carried to Tulare and Kern counties by the Friant-Kern Canal; and the Delta-Mendota Canal which carries Sacramento River water from Tracy to Mendota to irrigate the West Side of the San Joaquin Valley. Other dams such as Folsom, Monticello and San Luis are operated by the Bureau of Reclamation as part of the Central Valley Project.

The forrunner of the Central Valley Project was a plan drawn up by Col. Robert Marshall of the U.S.Geological Survey. This plan, embodied in the Water and Power Act of 1922, was defeated by the State Legislature, largely through the efforts of PG&E which opposed its power policies. A similar plan drawn up by State Engineer Edward Hyatt and called the Central Valley Project Act, slipped through a special session of the State Legislature in 1933. $170,000,000 in revenue bonds was authorized for construction. The Act provided for state generation and transmission of electricity and preference to public agencies in the sale of this electricity. Within a few weeks after the Act was signed by Gov. James Rolph, a referendum against it qualified for the ballot. It is estimated that PG&E spent morethan half a million dollars in the referendum campaign. The Central Valley Project Act, however, was upheld by a narrow margin of 33,000 votes.

In 1933 the nation was in the throes of a depression and California had little available cash to finance the project. The State applied for a public works grant from the federal government. When this was not forthcoming, the State requested the Federal Government to construct and operate the project. On Dec. 2, 1935, Congress authorized $20,000,000 to the Bureau of Reclamation to begin work and President Franklin D. Roosevelt indicated that federal reclamation law would apply.

This meant that the Central Valley Project would be subject to the land-limitation and anti-speculation features of reclamation law in exchange for federal subsidies and liberal repayment terms. Also that public agencies would be given priority in purchasing electricity generated by this mubti-purpose project.

During the early period of construction the State was so eager to get the project underway to provide work for thousands of unemployed that little attention was paid to the rules under which it would be operated. But as the unemployment situation eased and the implication of these regulations were realized, the utilities and big landowners launched a campaign against operation of the project under reclamation law. This took many forms and continues to this day.

Before beginning work on Shasta Dam and other initial works of the Central Valley Project, the Bureau of Reclamation drew up a comprehensive plan for basin-wide development of the land and water resources of the Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys. The plan proposed to integrate all dams and reservoirs, whether locally or federally operated, into a unified system. Such integration would save millions of acre feet of water which might otherwise go to waste.

To evade the acre limitation and power preference provisions of reclamation law, the enemies of the project advocated construction of certain facilities by the Corps of Army Engineers whose structures are supposed to deal primarily with flood control and improvement of navigation. Reclamation law does not apply to their operation.

Although the utilities and land monopolists were unable to get the main features of the Project authorized to the Army Engineers, they were successful in inducing Congress to authorize to this agency construction of such dams as Folsom on the American River, Pine Flat on Kings, Isabella on the Kern, Terminus on the Kaweah and Success on the Tule. The way was opened for piecemeal rather than integrated development of Central Valley water resources.

As Folsom Dam neared completion, however, President Truman ruled that the Army Engineers must turn over the power and irrigation facilities to the Bureau of Reclamation for operation as part of the Central Valley Project under reclamation law. Similarly operation of the irrigation facilities of Pine Flat, Isavella, Terminus and Success were turned over to the Bureau upon completion. Big landowners served bythese projects offered to pay the Federal Government a lump sum covering the cost allocated to irrigation in exchange for release from acreage limitation, but the government refused the offer. The matter is now in the courts.

As the initial features of CVP neared completion and water was ready for delivery, opponents of the project began a campaign urging irrigation and water districts not to sign contracts with the Bureau for water and repayment costs. They attacked the proposed contracts because under them ownership of the CVP would not pass on to water users at the end of the 50-year repayment period. They reasoned that if the project were ready to deliver water and there were no takers, the government would be forced to deliver water on terms dictated by water users. When water was ready for delivery in 1947, only one contract had actually been signed- with the Southern San Joaquin Muncipal Utility District , serving the area around Delano. Farmers in this area were so elated with their cheap water, however, that the word spread and soon voters in all eligible districts had overwhelmingly approved contracts with the Bureau even though they contained the controversial 160-acre limit.

Several attempts were made for outright repeal of the 160-acre limit on subsidized water. Rep. Alfred Elliot of Tulare County attached such a rider to the Rivers and Harbors Bill of 1944. This was defeated. Later Sen. Sheridan Downey tried to exempt the Central Valley Project from acreage limitation on grounds that large landholders who would not contract for project water would get it anyway from underground sources after percolation from the land of those who contract for water. Downey's campaign was dropped when Congressmen asked why the big landowners who allegedly would get free water if the 160-acre law were enforced were the chief proponents of its repeal! In 1959 Senators Engle and Kuchel attempted to attach to the San Luis Project appropriation bill a clause which would exempt its federal service area from acreage limitation. This failed, but the wording of the San Luis Act has been interpreted so as to exempt the State Service area of this joint Federal-State project from acreage limitation.

In 1952 a lower court judge refused to validate a contract between the Ivanhoe Irrigation District and the Bureau of Reclamation because of the acreage limitation clause. The decision was upheld by the State Supreme Court in 1957. The U.S. Supreme Court, however, ruled the contract valid and the acre limit law constitutional. The Reagan Administration opposes the acre-limit law and supports resolutions introduced in the Assembly and Senate calling upon Congress to modify or repeal the law.

The Pacific Gas and Electric Co. saw the Central Valley Project as a threat to its monopoly in the generation and distribution of electricity in Northern California. It vigorously opposed federal operation of generating and transmission facilities. Without transmission lines, the entire hydro-electric output of the Project would have to be sold to PG&E at bargain rates. Congress, however, appropriated funds for transmission lines from Shasta to Tracy and Shasta to Folsom. But the company was successful in blocking a line from Tracy to the San Luis project. The vast block of power needed to operate San Luis pumps will be transmitted by PG&E. The company also successfully opposed construction of a federal steam plant to firm the fluctuating output of project hydro-power. Because of lack of a steam plant, practically all surplus CVP power has gone to PG&E. The conflict between PG&E and the Central Valley Project will be discussed more fully in a later program.

Failing in their attempts to repeal the 160-acre limit law, to get the project assigned to the Army Engineers, and to prevent construction of transmission lines, the enemies of CVP launched a scheme for State purchase of the project. An intensive statewide campaign was conducted by the Farm Bureau, the State Chamber of Commerce, the Irrigation Districts Association and the Agricultural Council. The Federal Government was willing to sell the project if the State would reimburse the U.S.Treasury for expenditures already made and guarantee completion of the project within a reasonable time. But when farmers learned that the price of water under state operation would be three or four times what they were paying to the Bureau of Reclamtion, they overwhelmingly turned down the proposition.

Proponents of state purchase then reorganized as the State Feather River Ass'n and were successful in breaking off the Sacramento's largest tributary from the basin-wide Central Valley Project plan. This scheme for state development of the waters of the Feather River for shipment to the South San Joaquin Valley and Southern California became the basis for the State Water Project which has no acreage limit and which promises to become a bonanza for land speculators.

Much credit for enforcement of reclamation law during the early years of CVP must go to Interior Secretary Harold Ickes, under whom the project was launched, to J.A. Krug, his sucdessor, to Reclamation Director Michael Straus, and to Richard Boke, Director of the Bureau's Region II which includes the Central Valley Project.

In recent years the Bureau has been lax in assuring that maximum benefits go to family operated farms rather than to the land monopolists. The 160-acre law was seriously weakened by Interior Dept. rulings. For example, sale of the Di Giorgio 4000 acre Sierra Vista ranch, incompliance with the law, was delayed for 3 years while the company and the Bureau dickered over reappraisal of the land. The new appraisal set prices so high that there were no buyers. The Bureau then ruled that prospective buyers could purchase Di Giorgio land even though they were getting project water in other districts. Di Giorgio, with the consent of the Bureau, agreed to finance purchases and to operate the land for absentee owners. This amounts, in effect, to abrogation of the 160-acre limit law.

Another tactic of the land monopolists to evade reclamation law is to hire former Bureau of Reclamation officials at fancy salaries. For example, Ralph Brody, an attorney for the Bureau of Reclamation, was hired to manage the Westlands Water District. Gov. Brown then appointed him Chairman of the State Water Resources Board, the agency which seeks federal funds for California projects. When Brody appears before congressional committees, members have difficulty in determining whether he is speaking as a state official or as manager of the Westlands Water District. As manager of the District he sucessfully lobbied through Congress authorization and funds for the San Luis division of the CVP. Practically all water distributed by this division will go to the Westlands Water District. Brody was also successful in getting funds from Congress for a distribution system for the District. Construction is now underway even though more than 70% of the land in the district is in ownerships of more than 160 acres (320 for man and wife) and therefore not eligible to receive federally subsidized water. Owners of excess land have not yet signed the customary contracts to dispose of their lands after 10 years in order to be eligible for project water. Thus the federal government is spending over half a billion dollars for works to irrigate some 500,000 acres, most of which is ineligible to receive water. The subsidy amounts to over $1000 an acre. The Southern Pacific Railroad is the largest landowner, with 120,000 acres in the District.

A former Bureau official was also hired in 1963 by the Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District to negotiate a contract with the Bureau of Reclamation highly favorable to the District, and which renders meaningless the 160-acre limit law. The contract gives the District rights to 720,000 acre ft. of water. This is almost twice the average annual diversion from the Sacramento River prior to operation of Shasta Reservoir. Under the contract, the District gets the 720,000 acre ft. FREE and will pay only $2 an acre ft. for 75,000 acre ft. of "project water" to which acreage limitation is supposed to apply. This amounts to a huge give-away of water which properly should be used elsewhere.

At the same time the Glenn-Colusa deal was negotiated, the Bureau of Reclamation dropped its suit against landowners along the Sacramento River who for years have diverted millions of acre feet of water to which they were not entitled. No effort is now being made to recover payment for this stolen water.

Thus we see that those who opposed and sabotaged the Central Valley Project, have now managed to secure most of its benefits. PG&E has been the chief beneficiary of its hydro-electric generation. The land monopolists get cheap, subsidized water. Many of them sign contracts to dispose of their excess holdings after 10 years, hoping that at the end of that period the 160-acre law will be modified or repealed.

We should not minimize, however, the benefits the entire state has received from the Project. Without its cheap and abundant water, thousands of family-type farms would have had to suspend operations. Its hydro-electric capacity has prevented a serious power shortage in Northern California. Publicly owned electric systems, such as Sacramento, Roseville, Redding and Palo Alto, as well as federal agencies, have gotten allocations of cheap power thereby saving their customers millions of dollars. This cheap power has served as a yardstick to keep PG&E rates in line. A constant struggle on the part of working farmers, organized labor, community, church and veteran groups, however, has been necessary to secure and hold on to these benefits.

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